



Mc Dougall's Good Stories for Children



How Good Fortune Came to a Simple-Minded Blind Boy Who Found the Lost Wishing Cap Which Had Made R. Pendleton Rich

IN THE story of the Wishing Cap, which I told you a few weeks ago, you will remember that Robin Pendleton tossed the magic fez into the grass of his grandmother's garden and went home. On seeking it later it had disappeared. It was, as I told you, found by another, and I promised to relate what followed.

Little Simon Shadduck was a blind boy who was beside possessed of so feeble a mind as to be called Simple Simon by nearly everybody in the town. This simple-mindedness was shown in many ways, but when I tell you that if Simon were invited, for instance, to drink ice cream soda, he would, just as like as not, take plain water, you will see how simple he was.

He had always been blind, and a little shaggy, frisky, but very intelligent, dog, named Tatters, used to lead him about the streets; but Simon knew the town so well that in reality he did not depend on Tatters much for guidance. This was especially the case when the two rambled out in the suburbs, and in the fields and woods Tatters would scamper about chasing birds, butterflies and chipmunks as if he had no other or more serious duties.

Simple Simon, while he had not the least notion of what Tatters was so wildly pursuing, would cheer him on with shouts and laughter, so that sometimes the people passing by would stop and marvel at the jollity of the poor blind, weak-minded lad. Simon, however, enjoyed most the songs of the myriads of birds that from every bough above him poured forth joyous melody, and he would lie in the tall grass while the dog frisked about, and listen by the hour and never move until the music ceased and Tatters came poking his cold nose against his hand to tell him that the darkness which was always in Simon's eyes was coming over the whole world.

It was marvelous how cold Tatters' nose was even on the hottest day in summer, and it always made Simon jump a little when it suddenly touched his hot hand. Tatters had a habit of bringing everything that he found to Simon, and thus one day the boy became the possessor of Grandma Pendleton's wishing cap, that had caused Robin such trouble.

One fine morning Simon had discovered quite by accident that the gate of the old garden was not fastened, and venturing within he soon felt, as quickly as would a boy who could see, that it was a delightfully cool and shady retreat. Flinging himself in the grass he stretched out lazily, for this was a spot, he was sure, where birds would live, and he waited to hear them begin to carol.

However in a few minutes he forgot about the birds, for Tatters brought him something which felt like a cap without any peak, but it was all crusted and crinkly with trimming of gold braid, unlike any cap he had ever handled. Of course, he put it on his head to see what it really was, and it fitted quite perfectly.

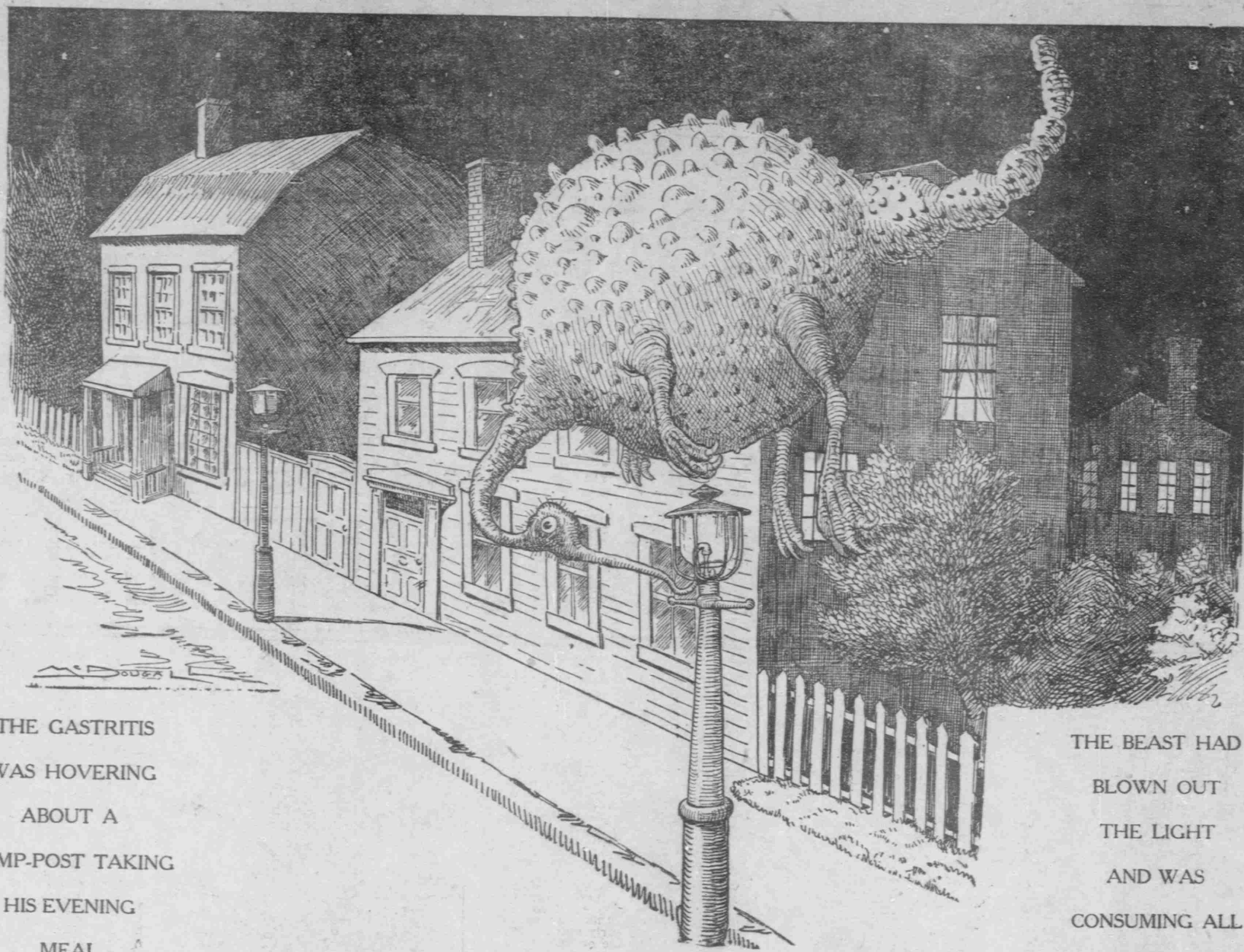
"I wonder what kind of a cap this is," he mused. "Tain't like none o' mine. I wish I could see now, 'cause maybe somebody's lost it and I might make a nickel by taking it to 'em."

As he spoke there came into his closed eyelids a gleam of light that made him open them wide. He saw the cool garden, with its gray shadows, its flaming peonies, the green lawn dotted with golden dandelions, the pebble-paved walks and the old sundial, but as he had never before seen anything at all he did not know what had happened for a few minutes. He felt of his eyes and stared again. Sitting on his hind legs before him was a shaggy creature eagerly peering up at him from an overhanging bunch of hair like a chrysanthemum. Simon stared harder and the animal uttered a wild, glad bark.

Then Simon reached out, seized the creature and instantly felt that it was Tatters. Then he realized that he could see. He felt all over the dog, at the same time closely examining him, thus ascertaining how things with which he was perfectly familiar looked to one who saw, and then he felt of the grass, of the pebbles, flowers, tree trunks, fences, everything, walking cautiously up to each, for somehow he seemed to be as if on air, so wonderful was the sky, the sunshine, the overhanging foliage and the singing things that flew through the air above him. Every moment he learned that the strange things which surrounded him were very well known to his deft fingers, but he could not comprehend what the sun was, nor the clouds, nor the hills so blue and misty in the distance, while the way the trees and flowers melted away beyond one another was very confusing at first.

After he had examined and handled every possible object in the garden he went into the road, and there he saw a man approaching. He stood in wonder and not until the man, who was Mr. Piperson, the painter, spoke did he know what it was. He recognized Mr. Piperson's voice and instantly took hold of him, feeling all over him.

"What's the matter, Simon?" asked the man in some wonder, then he suddenly exclaimed: "By Crickey—the boy can see!"



THE GASTRITIS
WAS HOVERING
ABOUT A
LAMP-POST TAKING
HIS EVENING
MEAL

"Yes," said Simon; "something happened to me, and I can see, but I ain't used to it yet. Have to feel everything."

"This is wonderful!" cried Mr. Piperson. He examined Simon's blue eyes with great interest, then he walked along with the boy explaining everything they saw until Simon understood a lot more than he did about visible objects, but still his mind was too weak to comprehend all. But every hour helped to strengthen his mind with the assistance of his eyes—but in his excitement he completely forgot about the wishing cap on his head.

All over town he went and everywhere people heartily congratulated him and marveled at the cure of his blindness, yet no one suspected the cause, but had Robin seen him he would have known what had done it.

Now this town wherein Simon Shadduck lived was peculiarly afflicted. No city since the horrid ancient times when fiery dragons devoured beautiful maidens and were encountered by brave knights has ever been so unfortunate as to be pestered by an animal. Of course there are places where wolves annoy and harass those who dwell there, but wolves are nothing compared to the pest that perplexed and distressed the inhabitants of this little town.

This animal was the Gastritis, so called because he lived on gas, common illuminating gas, which he procured from the lamp-posts at the street corners. He was enormous, encased in a thick, tough hide covered with lumps and protuberances, so that he looked like an immense pickle, and he had a small round head at the end of a long, thin, flexible neck. His nose was long and like a hose, small at the end, and this he adjusted to the gas burner after blowing out the light, of course, and then he slowly absorbed the city's gas until finally, filled to repletion, like a huge balloon he soared away in the darkness and floated far above the clouds until the gas was digested; then he returned for another meal.

People always knew when the Gastritis had arrived, for the lights in the houses and public places would begin to droop, flicker and then go out all over the city until there was scarcely enough left to fill a toy balloon. His hide, tougher and thicker than that of an alligator or a hippopotamus, was simply invulnerable, and the only weak and tender spot on his whole body was exactly on top of his back, where no bullets ever happened to strike when, as occasionally occurred, men got a shot at him with their rifles.

Beside, it naturally was extremely difficult to aim properly at him anywhere in the darkness, and nobody ever saw the Gastritis in the day time, of course.

Hundreds of plans were considered by the Mayor and Common Council, but nothing was ever devised to dispose of this nuisance, and it was the opinion of most people that another gas-house would have to be erected in order to keep the supply up, but it was feared that even then the animal would not be satisfied, or perhaps another might be tempted to come to his help. Once an immense trap was constructed, but the Gastritis, who was very intelligent, promptly kicked it to pieces, for he was larger than three elephants, and very powerful indeed.

Simon, who had often heard about the animal, was now extremely anxious to behold him, as so many other boys had done, and night after night he and Tatters prowled around the town hoping to come upon the great creature as he tapped some unwatched lamp-post, but he failed for a long time to find him.

Meanwhile, of course, he was learning many things, how his friends looked, all about colors, measurements and the like, and every hour he became brighter and more sensible, so that sometimes people forgot to call him "Simple Simon." He wore the old wishing cap, with its tarnished gold lace, all the time, but until a month had passed he never happened to make a wish. Then one afternoon something happened.

Squire Inglis had a big bulldog who was always very good-natured, but suddenly he became furious, so that no one dared enter the squire's yard. Everybody said the dog was mad, and the constable had gone for his gun in order to shoot poor old Boozie, when Simon happened to pass by. Seeing the crowd he pressed up to the fence and saw the wild and furious dog tearing around, biting everything, and evidently quite mad.

"I wish I knew what was the matter with him," said Simon to himself.

Instantly the thought or the knowledge of what ailed the poor dog flashed into Simon's brain, as well as the course to pursue. He sprang over the fence and approached Boozie, who immediately ceased his wild barking and feebly wagged his tail.

In spite of the warnings of all the crowd outside of the fence, Simon bent over the dog, who seemed to know that the boy was going to help him, and he examined his left ear. There he found, deep in the ear, a big, hard, prickly burr, one of the kind that gets into your shoe top in the fields and makes you skip lively. With some little difficulty, for the ear was very sore, he got it out, and then you should have seen Boozie frolic for relief and joy. All the people shouted and said that Simon was a wonder, and when the constable came with his gun he found Boozie trying to lick the skin off of the lad's nose, while Tatters was standing on his hind legs and making a speech!

But Simon never gave a thought to the manner in which he had discovered Boozie's trouble, for he did not connect it with the wishing cap, but he was mighty glad to have people stop calling him "Simple," and hail him afterward as "Smart Simon," and "Doctor Shadduck," for that's what they did all over town.

Boozie was so grateful that he followed Simon constantly, much to the jealousy of Tatters as well as Squire Inglis, but while formerly the bull dog might have been very useful in preventing other boys from teasing poor, blind Simple Simon, he now would never be called upon, as the boys no longer annoyed Simon, but always asked him to play with them whenever he appeared.

One evening Simon saw the Gastritis when least expecting to. He was hurrying home when the dogs suddenly began to bark furiously and Simon looking around and seeing them both gazing aloft, peered upward and saw a gigantic form floating in the air at the corner above a lamp post. Its long nose fast to the burner prevented it from soaring away, although the Gastritis was nearly full, for even its lumpy tail was inflated like a string of sausages. Its wicked red eyes glared down at him like little lamps and he felt a thrill of terror. Then after another quick glance he turned and fled. When he got home he told his mother that he had at last seen the monster.

"I hope you're satisfied now," said Mrs. Shadduck.

"Yes, I am," replied Simon. "But I wish that I was smart enough to think of some way to catch him, for the city has offered a reward of one

million dollars to the one who can destroy the creature."

"I wish so, too," added his mother. "But I am afraid we will have to keep on wishing."

"I dunno," remarked Simon after a long pause. "I begin to think that I can devise a scheme to catch him!"

Mrs. Shadduck looked at her son in amazement, for she had considered him as a poor, silly creature for so long a time that she really thought him incapable of thinking. His face now was lighted up with such a look of intelligence and thoughtfulness that he seemed to her quite another boy. Something seemed to crack apart in his brain as he made the wish, and all things seemed so clear and plain to him that no task would be difficult afterward. It was almost as marvelous to him as his restoration of sight, but it did not astonish him as much.

While his mother was staring at him in amazement Simon was turning over in his mind a plan for catching the Gastritis, a plan so simple that now he wondered why it had never occurred to anybody else, but it is just these great and simple things that none but geniuses ever conceive. I am myself often surprised at these things.

He soon had the scheme perfected, and without saying more he hurried to the Mayor's office, and when the Mayor had heard all the details he immediately called together the Common Council, which, when the members had fully comprehended the plan, issued an order that Simon should be obeyed by the gashouse officials in everything he commanded.

So that day, in obedience to Simon's order all the gas was allowed to escape from the great iron tank and from all the gas pipes in the city, after which the tank was filled with the very strongest brand of laughing gas, the same that is used by all dentists, only very much stronger, but none of it was allowed to enter the gas pipes at all.

Of course all this was done in secret, but when darkness came and there was no gas in all the city the people began to ask so many questions and there were so many complaints that Mr. Rorer, the Mayor's clerk, finally let the cat out of the bag.

Then there was the greatest excitement, I tell you, and the people were all on the watch all over

Through Its Powers He Learned to Kill the Aw- ful Gastritis Which Was Robbing His City of Light and Scaring Everybody

the city, hoping to see the Gastritis captured, for this plan of Simon's was simply perfect as well as astonishingly simple in all its details.

Pretty soon it was reported that the Gastritis was swooping around out in the suburbs, tapping lamp post after lamp post, and finally he was said to be hopping around, wild with hunger and disappointment for he couldn't get a mouthful of gas anywhere. Soon he was seen by everybody, madly careening from corner to corner, upsetting peanut stands and carts, ripping down awnings and breaking away hitching posts and uttering awful squeals, snorts and roarings.

The people fled indoors and hid under the beds in dismay, but as the Gastritis never ate meat they need not have been alarmed.

Finally the prickly-skinned monster approached the gas tank as he tried one lamp post after another, and then the suspense was dreadful.

Would he be caught?
Would the laughing gas take effect?
Could they dispose of him even if he were overcome by the gas?

These were the questions in everybody's mouth when the Gastritis at last tried a lamp post burner right near the tank.

As soon as this occurred Simon turned the laughing gas into the gas pipe leading to the spot where the monster stood sucking at the burner, and in an instant the gas was pouring into him. He seemed to like it, too, and he inhaled it eagerly until he was quite distended, then he began to laugh most uproariously, and dance about until, overcome by the vapor, he fell over on his side, and after a few feeble kicks, lay quite unconscious and inert.

"Now," thought Simon, "I wish I knew how to dispose of him, for bullets will not kill him."

Instantly he was aware, but how he could not have told, that there was a weak spot in the back of the unconscious Gastritis, and going to him he detected it at once.

They got a cannon and shot a lot of big bullets into the monster and all was over. He kicked a little, but never knew what had killed him, for he could feel no pain whatever.

Then they skinned him and sent the skin to a taxidermist to be stuffed and mounted.

Simon got the million dollars reward, and of course was never obliged to work afterward, but just rode around in an automobile and had cinnamon buns, ice cream and such things dozens of times a day. The stuffed Gastritis now stands in a room on the top floor of the City Hall and if you know the Mayor maybe he'll let you see it yourself some day. If he will not you can see by the picture just how he looked when he was almost filled to bursting with illuminating gas.

But how Simon lost the wishing cap I shall tell in another story.

WALT MCDUGALL.

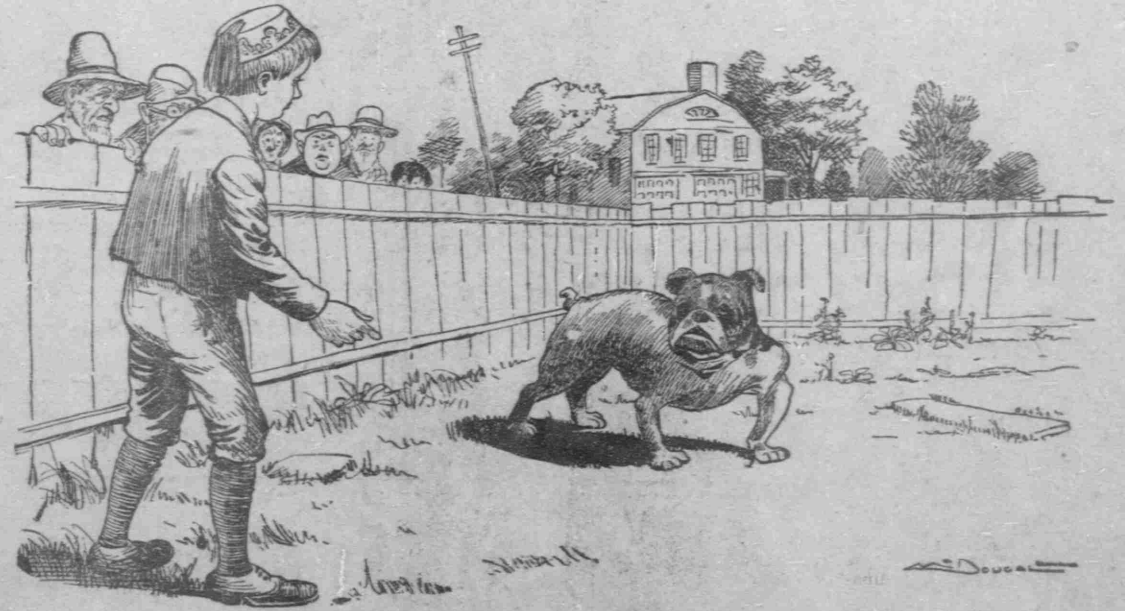
AN AUTOMATIC CAT

AN AUTOMATIC cat is made with a tin frame serving as skeleton. The skin of a deceased feline is stretched over this and eyes of glass inserted that throw out a baleful glare in the darkness.

This baleful glare is produced by a four-volt electric battery stowed away in that portion of "Tom's" anatomy generally occupied by the digestive organs. The principle of construction, according to the inventor, is based upon powerful clockwork, released by a hammer formed of the lower jaw of the cat, which explodes two percussion caps in the mouth.

One night, according to the genius, an experiment was made. The clockwork was wound up and the beast placed in a back garden. In due course a ferocious tabby of loose character and with chips off its ears walked up to the stranger to give battle, while a dozen of his lady friends sat around to see the fun.

In feline language the tabby appears to have asked his lady friends not to crowd into the ring, and to watch closely while he prepared "Tom" for the undertakers. He began by walking up to a wall and sharpening his claws. Then he came back wagging all that was left of his tail in an aggressive and insulting manner, and took the measure of his silent enemy.



BOOZER BECAME QUIET AT ONCE